

The Local Government Center (LGC) was created in 1985 to assist counties and municipalities with the Voter Review process whereby citizens vote to evaluate and change local government's operation. In 1993, the Montana State Legislature formally established the LGC's mission in the Montana Code Annotated: *The Center's purpose is to strengthen the capacities of Montana's local governmental units to deliver essential services efficiently and to provide training, technical assistance, and research to local officials MCA 20-25-237.*

The Center builds and sustains working long-term partnerships and collaborations with local governments and their professional statewide associations, key state agencies, non-profit organizations, and faculty and Extension staff of the Montana University System.

The Local Government Center was originally located on the Montana State University campus in the College of Letters and Science, affiliated with the Department of Political Science. Due to the broad outreach of the LGC across the State of Montana, and its comprehensive services to counties and municipalities, MSU Extension was requested to provide institutional oversight to the LGC within its statewide educational outreach network in January 2009. No current funding exists within the MSU Extension state general fund to support continued operations of the MSU Local Government Center beyond FY11, and the services provided by the MSU Local Government Center (which are not duplicated anywhere else in the state) are in jeopardy of discontinuation in 2012 without state support.

Across Montana, municipalities and counties benefit from the LGC's training and technical assistance related to governance, budgeting and roles and responsibilities.

LGC publications aim to inform and engage local government practitioners and the citizens they serve.

- The 2010 Municipal Officials Handbook
- The 2010 Montana Public Lands Guide
- Governing Montana at the Grass Roots: Local Government Structure, Process and Politics, 3rd Ed, (2010)
- Montana's Local Government Review (Rv. Ed. 2008)
- Serving on County Boards, Districts, Commissions and Committees in Montana (2008)



*"The competent LGC staff, with their wealth of combined knowledge, has aided me on numerous occasions. With the ever-changing rules and regulations that affect municipal governments, it is imperative to have the services offered by the LGC at our fingertips. Though the network of clerks and the Center, we are able to keep our offices running effectively. The annual training offered for clerks is invaluable on all levels."*

*-Agnes Fowler, Finance Officer, City of Conrad*

## LGC Training and Outreach

The LGC provides annual educational and certification workshops for elected and appointed public officials. These include:

- **Mayors Academy/Forum:** avg. attendance of 50 mayors
- **Municipal Officials Training:** workshops offered from Glendive to Libby, attended by 329 officials representing 68 cities and towns
- **County Commissioner Certification and County Officials Training:** avg. attendance of 50 county officials representing 96% of Montana's counties
- **Montana Municipal Institute for Clerks, Treasurers, & Finance Officers:** avg. attendance of 100 employees from 96 municipalities
- **Montana Municipal Elected Officials Training:** avg. attendance of 82 officials representing 75% of Montana's municipalities
- **Montana County Treasurers Certification School:** over 40 certified in the past two years
- **Certification Program for Clerks of District Court:** Thirty-five completed 4-year certification in 2008
- **Citizen Board Leadership Program:** more than 80 workshops delivered to more than 1750 individuals
- **Understanding Montana's Code of Ethics:** wrote the Ethics Handbook for the City of Bozeman and trained over 600 employees, elected officials and board members.

## Impacts from Trainings

### Regional Training for mayors, council members, attorneys, clerks:

- "The training information helped resolve disputes between the council and mayor as to scope of authority. As a result **the town government is operating more efficiently.**"
- "Meetings were only noticed at the post office. Work sessions and some meetings were not noticed correctly. After the LGC training, this changed and citizens are now encouraged to participate. **Meetings have gone from attendance by one citizen to an average of 10 to 20 people attending.** We hope to increase that number."
- "I actually vetoed a ruling my council approved, since it was completely illegal. **I would not have been able to do this if I had not attended the trainings.**"
- "I requested a training session to be held at the town civic center to include the council and any interested citizens. We had a good turnout and great feedback from everyone. **It was a turning point for the town** and helped us to resolve many problems."

### Municipal Institute for Clerks and Treasurers Training:

- "MSU LGC provides a valuable resource for training that **cannot be found anywhere else** in our state for our jobs."
- "ALL Clerks and Treasurers in this state **need constant education in order to do our jobs** and to help make wise decisions."